E226

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ4273

RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 14035 01 OF 02 232252Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01
	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	INL-01	DINT-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00	FBIE-00	FRB-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/021W		

----------905C1C 232252Z /38

O 232215Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6526
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 014035

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/08
TAGS: PREL, ETRD, PGOV, PBTS, PINR, CO, VE
SUBJECT: HUGO CHAVEZ VISITS COLOMBIA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 14035 01 OF 02 232252Z
REF: A) STATE 233224 B) CARACAS 3816

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR CURTIS W. KAMMAN. REASON 1.5 (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: [redacted] B1
ON THE RECENT VISIT OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT-ELECT HUGO CHAVEZ TO COLOMBIA. THE COLOMBIANS WERE PLEASED WITH THE VISIT AND WITH CHAVEZ. THEY HEARD POSITIVE MESSAGES ON PEACE AND BILATERAL RELATIONS. NOT SO WEL RECEIVED, HOWEVER, WERE CHAVEZ'S COMMENTS ON VENEZUELA ENTERING INTO DIRECT TALKS WITH MERCOSUR. WHILE CHAVEZ WAS A PLEASANT SURPRISE TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN MOST AREAS, HIS POSITION ON MERCOSUR HAS CAUSED CONCERN IN BOTH PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT CIRCLES. CHAVEZ ALSO LOOKED TO THE COLOMBIANS FOR GUIDANCE ON POLITICAL REFORM AND ON RELATIONS WITH

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 22 DEC 2018
DATE/CASE ID: 18 JUN 2007 200504156

THE UNITED STATES. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) AMBASSADOR CALLED ON [redacted] DECEMBER 22. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S INQUIRY, [redacted] OFFERED A WELL-REHEARSED OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT VISIT (DECEMBER 17 AND 18) OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT-ELECT HUGO CHAVEZ FRIAS. DURING HIS VISIT TO COLOMBIA, CHAVEZ TRAVELLED TO SANTA MARTA (WHERE BOLIVAR DIED) WITH COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT ANDRES PASTRANA, AND TO BOGOTA, WHERE HE WAS GUEST OF HONOR AT A DINNER AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND ADDRESSED A LUNCHEON ATTENDED BY 300-400 COLOMBIAN BUSINESSMEN. B1

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS
---

3. (C) [redacted] THE AMBASSADOR THAT THERE WAS A VERY GOOD ATMOSPHERE THROUGHOUT THE VISIT. HE ALSO SAID THAT CHAVEZ WAS VERY OPEN AND WILLING TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUE. THE COLOMBIANS FOUND HIM

 B1

WILLING AND EAGER TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOC ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES. [redacted] THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH CHAVEZ AS AN INTERLOCUTOR. THE COLOMBIANS ADMIRED HIS ABILITY TO MANAGE DISCUSSION OF A WIDE RANGE OF TOPICS, PARTICULARLY AT THE BUSINESS LUNCH.

SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS
---

4. (C) DURING HIS MEETINGS WITH GOC OFFICIALS, CHAVEZ CATEGORICALLY DENIED RUMORS WHICH SURFACED DURING THE CAMPAIGN THAT HE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH COLOMBIAN GUERRILLA GROUPS. CHAVEZ CLAIMED THAT HE HAD NO DIFFERENCES WITH THE GOC ON THEIR HANDLING OF EITHER THE PEACE PROCESS IN GENERAL OR THE SEVERAL GUERRILLA GROUPS. HE REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT VENEZUELA HAD A VESTED INTEREST IN SEEING THE COLOMBIAN PEACE PROCESS MOVE FORWARD. CHAVEZ'S PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS WERE SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOC'S EFFORTS AND OF PRESIDENT PASTRANA PERSONALLY AND WERE WELL RECEIVED IN COLOMBIA.

POLITICAL/CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM -- LESSONS TO BE LEARNED?
---

5. (C) [redacted] CHAVEZ ASKED FOR INFORMATION ON HOW COLOMBIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COULD BE APPLIED TO VENEZUELA. IN PARTICULAR, CHAVEZ WAS INTERESTED IN THE LEGAL MECHANISM USED TO CONVENE THE 1991 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CONSTITUYENTE) IN COLOMBIA THAT LED TO A NEW CONSTITUTION. CHAVEZ EXPLAINED HIS INTEREST IN REFORMING THE BASIC POLITICAL ORGANS OF VENEZUELA AND HIS BELIEF THAT ONLY A NEW CONSTITUTION COULD DO THIS. [redacted] B1

[redacted] CHAVEZ ASKED HOW THIS COULD BE DONE IF NO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 14035 01 OF 02 232252Z
CLEAR CONSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM EXISTS. (NOTE: WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE LACK OF SUCH PROCESS IN THE VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTION IS A MAJOR ROADBLOCK FOR CHAVEZ. WE FURTHER UNDERSTAND THAT THE PREVIOUS COLOMBIAN CONSTITUTION ALSO LACKED A MECHANISM FOR CALLING A CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY OR CONVENTION. END NOTE.) [redacted] EXPLAINED THAT COLOMBIA HAD USED A SERIES OF CONGRESSIONAL VOTES AND SUPREME COURT DECISIONS TO CONVOKE THE CONSTITUYENTE. [redacted] EXPERTS TO SHARE COLOMBIA'S EXPERIENCE; CHAVEZ WAS RECEPTIVE BUT NO SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENTS WERE AGREED.

B1

MERCOSUR - GOING IT ALONE
---

6. (C) THE ONE AREA OF DISCUSSIONS WHERE [redacted] COLOMBIAN SIDE WAS "DISTURBED" BY CHAVEZ'S POSITION WAS ON THE ISSUE OF POSSIBLE INDIVIDUAL VENEZUELAN LINKS TO MERCOSUR. IN HIS MEETINGS [redacted] CHAVEZ APPEARED TO BE CONTINUING HIS SUPPORT FOR "FOUR PLUS ONE" NEGOTIATIONS FOR VENEZUELAN INTEGRATION INTO MERCOSUR. [redacted] THE COLOMBIAN SIDE HAD EXPRESSED TO CHAVEZ THAT SUCH NEGOTIATIONS WOULD RUIN THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY AND THAT THE COMMUNITY SHOULD NEGOTIATE WITH MERCOSUR AS A BLOC. [redacted] THAT CHAVEZ SEEMED NOT TO ACCEPT THIS ARGUMENT.

B1

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ4274

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 14035 02 OF 02 232252Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-08	ACDE-00	INLB-01	AID-00	ACQ-01	CEA-01
	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	INL-01	DINT-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00	FBIE-00	FRB-00
	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-01	ADS-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/021W		

----------905C25 232252Z /38

O 232215Z DEC 98
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6527
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 014035

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/23/08
TAGS: PREL, ETRD, PGOV, PBTS, PINR, CO, VE
SUBJECT: HUGO CHAVEZ VISITS COLOMBIA

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 14035 02 OF 02 232252Z
REF: A) STATE 233224 B) CARACAS 3816

7. (U) THE COLOMBIANS ARE NOT HAPPY AT THE PROSPECT OF VENEZUELA GOING IT ALONE ON MERCOSUR NEGOTIATIONS. ON DECEMBER 23, SECOND LARGEST DAILY "EL ESPECTADOR'S" LEAD EDITORIAL WAS TITLED "CHAVEZ AND MERCOSUR." IN IT, THE PAPER ARGUES THAT THE BEST POLICY FOR BOTH COUNTRIES IS FOR THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY TO NEGOTIATE WITH MERCOSUR AS A COMPLETE BLOC. ALSO ON DECEMBER 23, FINANCIAL DAILY "LA REPUBLICA" CARRIED COMMENTS FROM MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE MARTA LUCIA RAMIREZ SAYING THAT FOR VENEZUELA TO NEGOTIATE ALONE WOULD "PROFOUNDLY AFFECT" ANDEAN INTEGRATION. THE ARTICLE FURTHER QUOTES RAMIREZ AS SAYING SHE HOPES THAT CHAVEZ WILL LISTEN CLOSELY TO VENEZUELAN ACADEMICS AND BUSINESSMEN "SO THAT HE WILL FORM A MORE COMPLETE PICTURE OF THE CONSEQUENCES THIS COULD BRING FOR VENEZUELAN BUSINESSES."

OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION
---

8. (C) DURING HIS MEETINGS, CHAVEZ COMMENTED ON THE OVERLAP OF INTERESTS BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA. HE CITED THE GROUP OF THREE (MEXICO, VENEZUELA AND COLOMBIA) AS AN IMPORTANT FORUM FOR BOTH NATIONS. CHAVEZ ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN REACHING OUT TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC AND PANAMA. [redacted] THE GOC WOULD SUPPORT IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BOTH COUNTRIES, AS THE COLOMBIANS HAVE BEEN PLANNING SIMILAR OUTREACH EFFORTS. B1

[redacted] B1

[redacted] B1

RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES -- HOW DO YOU DO IT?
---

10. (C) [redacted] TO THE AMBASSADOR THAT CHAVEZ SEEMED WELL-ATTUNED TO U.S. INTERESTS AND SEES THE VALUE OF GOOD BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. CHAVEZ ASKED [redacted] ADVICE ON MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IN LIGHT OF [redacted] SUCCESS IN THAT AREA. [redacted] IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AVOID SURPRISES AND BE STRAIGHT-FORWARD WHEN DEALING WITH THE UNITED STATES. [redacted] CHAVEZ AS RECEPTIVE TO PASTRANA'S ADVICE ON THIS SUBJECT. B1

LUNCH WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY
---

11. (C) ON DECEMBER 18, CHAVEZ ATTENDED A LUNCH OF LEADING COLOMBIAN BUSINESSMEN, MANY OF WHOM HAVE SUBSTANTIAL COMMERCE WITH VENEZUELA. [redacted] AMBASSADOR THAT CHAVEZ WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE SAID ALL THE RIGHT THINGS TO ALLEVIATE ANY FEARS THAT THIS GROUP HAD OF A CHAVEZ PRESIDENCY. THE GROUP MEMBERS, ACCORDING TO [redacted] LOCAL PRESS REPORTS, WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED WITH CHAVEZ'S PRESENTATION AND PLEASED WITH WHAT HE HAD TO SAY. WORRISOME TO [redacted] THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, HOWEVER, WAS THE FACT THAT CHAVEZ DID NOT SEEM TO THEM TO BACK AWAY FROM HIS THREAT TO NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY WITH MERCOSUR AND LEAVE THE REST OF THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY BEHIND. B1

CONFIDENTIAL

COMMENT
---

12. (C) CHAVEZ'S VISIT WAS SURPRISINGLY POSITIVE AS VIEWED BY THE GOC, HIS SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS AND ASSURANCE OF NOT HAVING BACK-DOOR CONTACTS WITH GUERRILLA GROUPS REASSURED THE GOC. THE PUBLIC WAS SIMILARLY REASSURED BY HIS PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE PEACE PROCESS. [redacted] THE ONE NEGATIVE, AND IT IS A BIG ONE, WAS CHAVEZ'S POSITION ON MERCOSUR NEGOTIATIONS. COLOMBIA IS CURRENTLY PRESIDENT OF THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY, A POSITION IT TAKES SERIOUSLY, AND DOES NOT WANT TO SEE THE COMMUNITY SPLIT OVER THIS ISSUE. [redacted] IF CHAVEZ STICKS TO HIS ANNOUNCED PLANS ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH MERCOSUR, IT WILL LIKELY B1

PUT AN EARLY STRAIN ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

KAMMAN

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>